DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 196 064 CS 503 159

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TITLE The Theory Aspect of the Basic Course in Theory and Criticism.
PUB DATE 77
NOTE 20p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Drama; *Dramatics; Higher Education; *Hypothesis Testing; *Teaching Methods; *Theories

ABSTRACT

Most theatre people (academic and professional) are disdainful of dramatic theory and related matters. Teachers of theory, criticism, and history assert the importance of their studies but do not demonstrate that importance. It is easier for teachers to expose students to explicit material on theory and test them to see if they remember it than to have the students analyze and evaluate it. A reasonable theory course might do the following to help students better understand the use of theory: (1) introduce the student to the basic issues of epistemology, as background for reading Plato and Aristotle; (2) exercise the basic conceptual and evidential skills by analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating assertions by Artistotle and other theorists; (3) synthesize available understanding, to make clear that theory is not what Aristotle said, but what is understood. Some classroom activities aimed at achieving these ends would include role playing in which the class takes the part of Aristotle defending drama to the instructor's Plato, who is trying to ban drama from his republic. Or the class might defend Shakespeare against Voltaire, which gives the students an opportunity to evaluate and understand these theories rather than just memorize them. (HTH)

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1977

"The Theory Aspect of the Basic Course in Theory and Criticism"

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As those who heard my paper on "The Decadence of Dramatic Theory" at the 1976 convention already know, I believe we are in trouble in both the doing and the teaching of dramatic theory. Traditionally, we have gathered all opinions about drama and theatre together in one undifferentiated pile and taught them exclusively as history. Our goal has been to know (in the most superficial sense) what has been said. Approached this way, the study of theory (etc.) is of almost no use, and our students and colleagues have let us know that this is just how they feel about it. Today I'll continue that argument in more specific detail. My comments, of course, are far from complete or definitive. They're meant only as a provocation for the discussion to follow.

Why are so many theatre people (academic and professional) disdainful of theory and related matters? Surely if they thought for a moment about the basic idea of theory (i.e. that theory is simply a systematic effort to explain our experience) they would not be so disinterested. The answer must be that when they hear the term they don't think of the basic point of theory but, rather respond to associations they have with the term from their reading and classroom experience of something called theory. Unless they are unusually sophisticated about such matters, they probably don't know what the term means, even though they may have taken a course in theory. Chances are, even after that basic course, they would not be able to tell you which of the famous works they read are appropriately called theory. They probably have no understanding of the current state of dramatic theory, either what is known or what work is being done. And it is certain that most of them lack the ability to evaluate theoretical statements or to do theoretical work themselves.

They don't know much about our work, and this ignorance doesn't bother

them much, because the whole enterprise seems irrelevant to them. Teachers of theory, criticism, history, etc., assert the vital importance of their studies for the producers, but our way of dealing with the matter doesn't demonstrate that importance. Perhaps the clearest indication of our "disconnection" from practical issues is the skimpiness of the attention we give to the theoretical work of our own time and our failure to synthesize this work and integrate it into texts.

Why is it so? Why, when we find urgency in these matters, do we communicate so little? I suppose the basic answer is the same for all teachers: it's easier to simply expose students to explicit material and test them to see if they remember it. Digging out what is implicit, analyzing it and evaluating it, determining its place in an overall scheme of dramatic thought, is hard work and we have been little trained to do it. We are too narrowly educated in the history of ideas and philosophy, etcetera.

We frankly don't know about most of the forces which have shaped dramatic theory; and if we don't know what produced these documents, we can't hope to grasp them fully. And we, like teachers in all corners of the campus, tend to over-estimate the students' readiness to deal with such matters. Every theory teacher I've met vows a deep committment to full contextualizing and exegesis, but when I examine the actual classroom practice, I find that the making of connections, rigorous evaluation, the searching for roots, all are taken for granted. They are "obvious" to the teacher so they are too often left implicit in the classroom. The hard fact is that none of this is obvious to our student. It's a new kind of head-game to him; he's never played it before and he'll need to be led through the basic inferential processes many times before he'll begin to have the nerve and skill to do it himself.

But the biggest problem in the teaching of dramatic theory is epistemological naivete. That is, we have not mastered the basic tools of abstract thought and we don't know the rules of the game.

There is no way to get away from this:

- the main issues in dramatic theory are epistemological
- the main skills in dramatic theory are epistemological
- most of us are epistemologically unprepared.

By epistemology, I mean that broad range of disciplines which concern themselves with control of our thought processes, such things as Semantics, Logic, Information Theory, etcetera. We're naive in such matters because, for most of us, the curriculum just didn't require us to deal with them and our advisors weren't able to demonstrate their urgency to us. The theatre scholar who has mastered these disciplines reasonably has had to find his way alone, and that isn't easy. Nevertheless, if we don't master them, we aren't ready to teach the theory course. There isn't time for me to elaborate on this today. I dig into it a bit more deeply in a paper I'll present tomorrow. For now, I'll leap into a few specific requirements of a reasonable theory course.

I feel obliged to do these things:

1) Introduce the student to the basic issues of epistemology. When he enters the class, he almost certainly is, without knowing it, a naive empiricist: i.e. he believes in the reality of matter and in the significance of careful observation, but this productive attitude is undermined by his unwarranted belief that things are as they seem. He confuses words with the reality to which they refer; he believes that, when he opens his eyes, he sees what is there and if we disagree about what is there, we're either dumb or naughty. He has no idea of the meaning or significance of ideas such as abstraction, correlation, or relativity. He wouldn't know a Materialist from an Idealist if he argued all night with one, and he surely doesn't know which he is. He doesn't know what the dominant world-view is or what its effect is on our thought; in fact, he probably doesn't know what a world-view is and doubts that he has one. He entertains contradictory beliefs with no discomfort because he doesn't notice; he lacks the skill to demonstrate the contradictoriness of beliefs even when he senses it. Etcetera. (And this is the student we introduce to theory by asking him to get a good grip on Plato and Aristotle. This is optimism run rampant! Let me dig at this a bit more:

I'm convinced that one cannot read the Poetics adequately without first getting a grip on Aristotle's works on Logic, Natural Science, Biology, Psychology, Metaphysics, Ethics, Politics, and Rhetoric, or at least major parts of them. And we can't really read these works well without first reading much of Plato. Most teachers, by this standard are unready for the Poetics. What will the student make of it? At a minimum, the student must be introduced to the philosophic issues which are assumed by Aristotle's work. More of this later.) At any rate, the starting point needs to be an introduction to the game, a warning about the key issues, and advice on how to begin studying these strange new matters. Before we can profitably study theories or theorizers, we must study theory as a kind of human effort; that's my point.

2) Exercise the basic conceptual and evidential skills. Most of the time in this course should be spent in identifying, analyzing, organizing, synthesizing, verifying, and evaluating. Assertions mustn't be allowed to come and go without being put through this mill. When we deal with Aristotle we'll want to know, among other things, what is the social basis for his statement? the philosophical basis? what evidence is he presenting? what arguments? do they hold up? what kind of talk is this? to whom is he speaking? why? to what extent and in what way is his work situation-bound? is he consistent? does it really matter? and on and on. Though this effort will produce an understanding of Aristotle, we teachers ought to be concerning ourselves primarily with the process of reasoning that we observe. It is much more important that we learn to read Aristotle than that we accumulate information about what he said.

But my experience tells me that this approach, this exercising of skills through the study of theorists, is not enough. It is necessary to deal with the skills directly, apart from the distracting influence of important subject matter. Students need to be drilled in all types of analysis. They need to practice fundamental information processing skills. In other words, they need a short course in Cognitive Skills. It may seem like a terrible digression from the traditional subject matter of the course, but it is worth it. I'll go out on a limb and predict this: given a ten week course, we will learn more about dramatic theory proper if we spend the first five weeks on Cognitive Skills training and don't mention dramatic theory until the last five weeks than if we skip the skills and dig immediately into Aristotle. It has been so for me.

3) Synthesize our available understanding. Picking and choosing from whatever sources we can find, we must reach some conclusion about the current understanding of drama and theatre. The battles we fight as we try to adopt this idea and reject that will yield an impressive list of live issues in dramatic theory which are waiting for the theorists of today and tomorrow. We'll also find a lot of gaps in our understanding.

> More gaps than solid conclusions, I'm sure. It's in this effort that we have our greatest opportunity to make theory a vital, urgent, practical matter for our students. I know of no better way to make it clear to them that theory is not "what Aristotle said" but "what we understand." This work is the meat of the course for me. That agenda of problems-to-be-solved which you send away with your student may just be the hook which keeps him on the theory line for the rest of his career.

Sounds like a lot to cover. It is. And we must face some tough decisions before we begin the course. The toughest is this question: what is the minimum change in skill and understanding which this course must evoke in the student if we are to believe it is worth having done? I'm not so foolish as to try answering that question now, but I do want to convince you that it takes a lot of careful thought to find a reasonable answer. Theory training is not like food. Some is not always better than none. Just sticking your toe briefly into the waters of Aristotle may be enough to make you swear off the game for life. I'll give you a part of an answer: I would cut 80% of the traditionally-covered writers on dramatic theory before I'd give up a rigorous introduction to Cognitive Skills. I'd rather just deal with Plato/Aristotle, Lessing, Brecht, Barry, and Gross and let the others be forgotten than fail to help the student learn how to distinguish a metaphorical statement from a literal one, or a fact from an opinion, or a theory from a manifesto, or a matter of reasoning from a matter for quantitative research.

I want to deal briefly with a few specific "content" matters I'd cover. I begin with the issue of the origin of theatre, so, except for Aristotle, most of the reading will be the work of contemporary writers. I have the students compare the Cambridge anthropologists' ideas with Kirby, with Aristotle, with Hunningher. They would carefully analyze the reasoning and evidence presented by each (not merely the conclusions). They would go on to consider the problem of answering this question of origin and would propose the next step in the process, if indeed they decide the issue is worth

considering at all. And they would consider the most important question: how does a consideration of the origins of theatre illuminate our efforts to understand our own theatre? Does it, perhaps, suggest riches lost or paths mistaken? But perhaps the most important product of this effort will be an intense introduction to the question of the interaction of performance and society, an issue which ought to come up again and again through the term.

I'd deal with Plato and Aristotle, no doubt, and I'd spend a lot of time on it. Not because the two of them are that important in themselves but because, to deal with them, we must come to grips with the enormous philosophical chasm which separates the two and creates their debate. To put it over-simply, though they disagree fully on several fundamental issue, each is correct <u>if</u> his Metaphysics and Epistemology are correct. The debate is not between two opinions about the what's good in theatre and the answer is not a matter of fact. The debate is between Materialism and Empiricism (the bases of Aristotle's thought) on the one hand the Idealism and Rationalism (the bases of Plato's thought) on the other. (Well, actually, it's not quite that simple. Aristotle suffers from inadequate weaning; there's a bit of Plato's Idealism still in him and I believe it explains the stranger contradictions we find in the <u>Poetics</u>.) It takes time to introduce these philosophical concerns well, but they underlie all of dramatic theory and we'd better understand them from the start. The Materialism-Empiricism vs. Idealism-Rationalism debate still goes on, unfortunately, and even last year's better theatre books can't be fully understood unless we have a grip on the issue. In helping our students to an understanding of this issue, we will necessarily introduce them to the third of the major orientations, Relativism, which is the reigning Epistemology of our own world (the sophisticated part of it at least). If we are willing to go beyond Plato and Aristotle, we can find the prototype of Relativism in the thought of the Greek Sophists. They didn't write about drama, but what they said is so fundamental to modern thought, so much closer to us than Plato or

Aristotle are, that we ought not to ignore them.

This conflict-of-ideas approach, by the way, is generally useful. Students come to grips with ideas more eagerly and insightfully in this format. It reduces the awe factor (which is a terrible mind-numbing force) and makes it clear that the questions are still open, that they themselves might contribute. I'll have a few examples later.

If I'm to finish my task today, I'll have to settle for these few sketchy ideas about content and turn my attention to the matter of classroom technique. For me, the obvious starting point is the fact that it doesn't do much good to simply assign reading and ask the students to be prepared for discussion. It also doesn't do much good to simply lecture to them, to tell them what they should have understood as they read. These are too vague and too passive. Until the student is personally <u>engaged</u> with the material, <u>trying to do something</u> to it, he won't be mobilized fully enough to make real progress. Recognizing this, I've devised many approaches to classroom and homework activity which fall outside the traditional patterns. I'll briefly list a few:

- <u>Roleplaying #1</u>: Before we have "come to grips" with Plato and Aristotle on the philosophical level, we play this game: the class, collectively, plays the role of Aristotle as best it can on the basis of assigned reading (all of them reading the <u>Poetics</u> and individuals reading crucial bits from his other works; I play the role of Plato. On the appointed day, I, as Plato, attack drama and ban it from my Ideal REpublic. The class, as Aristotle, defends as best it can. If I press the arguments fully enough, the students, without coaching, realize that there is something deeper, beneath the argument about drama; they find their own ways to the philosophical issues, at which point I can usefully fill them in on these matters. Then, when I send them out to read more deeply, they are eager and efficient because they have become engaged in the argument.

- <u>Roleplaying #2: the Roundtable:</u> Students roleplay a variety of historical figures, debating their dramatic opinions and the deeper issues which shape the opinions. For example, I like to put together Aristotle, Lessing, and the Renaissance "Aristotelians". I also enjoy, and they profit from a game in which Aristotle and Brecht have at each other. (Brecht, by the way, usually ends up convicted of liable for his defamation and misinterpretation of Aristotle.) I'd like to stack Barry, Beckerman, and Gross up against Fergusson, Abel, Schechner, and Cole. (That one might make a good convention panel.) Or how about a hypothetical Shakespeare and

Goethe against Corneille, Voltaire, and Ben Jonson? This kind of game guarantees that the student will penetrate the surface and really consider, not just memorize, what he reads. (Fear is a powerful motivator.)

- The Advisor's Critique: this is a written assignment. The student plays the role of the theorist's graduate advisor. He examines Brecht's Messingkauf Dialogues, for example, as an advisor would a thesis, dealing with matters of reasoning, evidence, specificity, clarity, etcetera. Again, the assignment requires the student to grapple with the ideas, not just expose himself to them.

- The Great Document Discovery: written. The student composes one of the great missing documents from the history of theory; missing, that is, in our minds. For example, he writes Aristotle's treatise on Comedy. He writes the comprehensive explanation and justification of Romanticism we all wish someone had written. He writes Shakespeare's critique of Castelvetro. There are endless possibilities here. The task requires the student to understand the implications of what he reads and that's always a hard thing to get at.

- A PLEASANT DAY'S DIVERSION: is the title of a play of sorts I wrote to clarify an idea which just defies explanation in words; at least verbal explanations don't seem to have adequate impact. The issue at hand is one I think is fundamental to drama: the distinction between illusion and delusion and the significance of that distinction for drama. The play is actually a play within a play within a play...and so on. About 15 minutes into it, the student audience loses its ability to say whether what they are seeing is reality or drama. It simply blows their minds. You wouldn't believe how excited and distressed an audience gets when it loses that guarantee that everything on the stage is fiction and is well under control. When we debrief the audience the next day, they know the difference between illusion and delusion and why it matters.

- Papers: in addition to the two papers mentioned above, I also allow students to write on topics like these:
  - a theoretical study of some event
  - a theoretical study of some key concept in drama
  - a theoretical study of some key concept in theatre
  - a study of some theoretical technique
  - a mediation between opposing theorists
  - an explanation of the forces shaping a theoretical statement.

  And such things. What I do not allow is a paper summarizing the work of anyone.

- Productions: We attend productions and then dig into the theoretical issues involved. This is a particularly good way to bridge the theory/production gap, especially if the teacher is adept at leading the students to the issues, which is admittedly difficult.

- The Glossary: This may be the most important assignment of the term. It isn't feasible to try to cover all the basic concepts of dramatic theory in class, but I'm determinied that they will be familiar with them before they escape me. I have put together a very lengthy list of words, all of them labels for the concepts which allow us to manipulate ideas, relate things, actions, qualities and to control our information and observation. I require the students to make a glossary which I think of as the basic tool of their trade. They are told to look up each word in a variety of dictionaries (including a standard, a philosophical, a scientific, a literary, a psychological, and grandaddy, the OED). Having analyzed these definitions and considered the work they do in each of the fields considered, they then consider the work the concept has to do in theatre and then they do something very creative: they synthesize their own definition, the one they will use in their own thinking and writing. Having run the gamut of uses of each of these concepts in their search, they are ready to react subtly to the different readings they will find in their reading, to respond openly and thoughtfully, not automatically. I can't think of a much more useful assignment.

But enough of this. Here's a quick reprise of what I've tried to say: subject matter of our theory course should be drama and theatre, not a book full of prestigious documents from the history of dramatic opinion. Our goal ought to be to understand the theatre better, and to do that we will have to pursue the preliminary goal of understanding how to deal with ideas, how to evaluate arguments, how to draw implications, how to read in the deepest sense. The book full of prestigious documents is the raw material upon which we exercise our skills and from which we hope to draw a few insights into our own theatre work and the possibilities of the future.

We should aim to produce students whose theatre work is thoughtful and careful, not just more of the old ego-bound impressionism. We want them to go beyond us, I hope, and so we must persuade them that it is possible and worth the struggle, and then we must give them the tools.

APPENDIX: SAMPLE ASSIGNMENTS

TO: Th 678 class
FROM: gross

RE: your glossary

Here are the terms which you are to turn into a useful glossary for people concerned with Dramatic Theory (etc.). The point is for you to sort out the concepts symbolized by these words so that they provide you with a specific and precise conceptual system with which you can productively handle your experience and your thought in this area.

Rule one: use multiple sources in every case. I suggest a major general dictionary (best would be the Oxford English Dictionary because it gives not only current but historical usage); a dictionary of Philosophy, a dictionary of Science, a dictionary of Psychology, a dictionary of Literary Terms, and the basic books in our trade. The point is to synthesize the most useful, precise definition for yourself, not merely to find one.

Rule two: define all of these terms "interactively"; i.e. as you work on each, think of its relation to the others. Ask yourself; "what ground should this term cover, given the ground already covered by other terms and the ground remaining to be covered." If you find some of the words synonymous, look again, be more particular and precise. In several instances I have given you clusters of very closely related terms. The point is for you to see clearly the fine differences in their reference and referents.

I have grouped the terms loosely according to major "territories" and rule two applies particularly within these clusters.

Be bold. Don't hesitate to be critical of the usage of others if you can do it on clear, logical or pragmatic grounds. Think of yourself as the one who must save us from the chaos and confusion of our conceptual system.

It is best to use linguistic parallelism as much as possible. Don't take a different tack with each term.

Make stringent demands of clarity and coherence. We want to know exactly what you mean. Be as tangible as you can; don't get lost in vague abstractions.

Good luck. (I've included little notes after some terms to suggest sources or specific senses I have in mind. "UP" means "be sure to consult Understanding Playscripts on this term."

ART
AESTHETICS
SCIENCE

THEORY: 1) specific ("a theory")
2) general ("some theory")
THEORETICAL
THFORETICAL ENTITIES (also called HYPOTHETICAL CONSTRUCTS) (see Phil.)
THEOREM
HYPOTHESIS
DESCRIPTION: (the narrow, exact sense used in Phil. and Science)
EXPLANATION: (" " " " " " " " ")

GENERALIZATION
ASSERTION
SENTENCE (Phil. sense)
MANIFESTO
INTERPOLATION
SIGN (UP)
SIGNAL (UP)
REPRESENTATION (UP)
SYMBOL (UP)
ICON (UP)
SIGNIFICANCE: 1) Semantic sense (UP)
2) Statistical sense
ANALOGY
METAPHOR: 1) popular, English dept. sense
2) broader, cognitive process sense

INVENTION
DISCOVERY

SKEPTICISM
IDEALISM (Phil.)
RATIONALISM (Phil.)
INTUITIONISM (Phil./Aesth.)
EMPIRICISM (Phil.)
PLURALISM
ECLECTICISM
DOGMATISM
MONISM

MEANING (UP)
SYNOPTIC MEANING (UP)
ARISTOTLE'S FOUR CAUSES
PARAMETER (Science and UP)
TOLERANCE (Engineering and UP)

CONSCIOUS (UP)
NON-CONSCIOUS (or PRE-CONSCIOUS or SUB- and SUPRA-CONSCIOUS --- UP)
INSTINCT
INTUITION
CREATIVITY
LOGIC
LOGICAL
INDUCTIVE
DEDUCTIVE
HYPOTHETICO-DEDUCTIVE (UP)

PREMISE
ASSUMPTION
POSTULATE
CONJECTURE
PROPOSITION
THESIS
PREDICTION
A PRIORI
SELF-EVIDENT

SUPPORT:
    GENERAL:
    EMPIRICAL:
    RATIONAL:
    PSYCHOLOGICAL:
    CULTURAL:
EVIDENCE
VERIFICATION
PROOF
CONFIRMATION
POSSIBLE
TENABLE
REASONABLE
VALID
RELIABLE
ENTAILS (verb)
NECESSARY
SUFFICIENT
FACT
TRUTH
LAW
PROBABLE
ANTECEDENT PROBABILITY
REFUTATION
DISCONFIRMATION

INFERENCE
IMPLICATION
EXTRAPOLATION
CONSEQUENCE

EXPLANATORY POWER
PARSIMONY (or ELEGANCE or OCCAM'S RAZOR)
TACT (Philosophical sense)
PRINCIPLE
CONCEPTUAL SYSTEM
CONCEPT
IDEA
THING
ENTITY
OCCURENCE
QUALITY
ABSTRACT: 1) verb
          2) adj.
ABSTRACTION: 1) verbal noun
             2) noun
MODEL (scientific sense)
PARADIGM (epistemological sense)
WELTANSCHAUNG
PHENOMENON
PHENOMENOLOGICAL (Phil./Psych. sense)

BELIEF
KNOWLEDGE
OPINION

PROBLEM
ALGORITHMIC (UP)
HEURISTIC "
ANALYSIS "
SYNTHESIS "
UNDERSTANDING "
INTERPRETATION"
DEFINITION (include at least REAL, STIPULATIVE, OPERATIONAL)
EMPIRICISM (scientific/experimental sense)
EXPERIMENT
RIGOR

SEMANTICS
EXEGESIS
HERMENEUTICS
MATRIX (as "master context", see UP)
MATRIX (in statistical sense)

REFERENT (see Richards/Ogden, The Meaning of Meaning)
REFERENCE (" " " " " " ")
UNITY (see UP)
DESIGN
SYSTEM
PATTERN
ORDER
PURPOSE
CONTINUUM
DISCRETE
FUNCTION
INTEGRITY
GESTALT
CONFIGURATION
PROPORTION
RATIO
BALANCE
SYMMETRY
ASSYMMETRY
CONCEIT
ORGANIZATION
ORGANIC
ESSENCE
QUINTESSENCE
ARCHITECTONICS
CORRESPOND
CORRELATE
CONGRUENCE
PERSPECTIVE
ASPECT
INTENTION
INTEGRATION
INDIVIDUATION
IDENTITY
ANALOG
MATERIALISM (as Phil. system)
IDEALISM (" " ")
EMPIRICISM (" " ")
RATIONALISM (" " ")
RELATIVISM (" " ")
DUALISM (as Phil. notion)
MONISM (" " ")
PLURALISM(" " ")

SAMPLE ASSERTIONS FOR ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION:

(from Roger Gross, Understanding Playscripts, pp. 5-7)

I want to digress briefly to set down my "Poetics," the basic assumptions from which I work. These things seem unquestionably "true" to me, but I won't argue them. That would be matter for another book. These beliefs underlie all that follows:

Drama is not an earthly reflection of the "idea" of Drama which exists somehow, somewhere as a Platonic absolute. Drama is one of the kinds of behavior people engage in. The category is defined by what people do and what they choose to call their doings; what people do is not (or should not be) defined by Drama. The limiting conditions which we call "the conditions of Drama" are actually conditions of those people who participate in Drama. Any "rule" or basic "fact" of Drama can be explained in terms of a precedent fact of human psychology or social conditioning, or habit. There is no such thing as Drama.

There are people, and these people do various things. For simplicity in dealing with people and their activities, it is convenient to consider both the people and their activities in groups according to certain common respects chosen for convenience. Groupings are controlled by the chosen point of view. Those events referred to as "Dramas" are similar because we choose to see those aspects of them which are like; if we change our point of view we will see them as quite unlike. We may, for convenience, shift about on the continuum between the two polar "truths": 1)all creation is one; 2)no two things are identical. One is as true as the other. All our categories are fictional, arbitrary. We have no difficulty until we forget this arbitrariness.

The facts-about-people which affect Drama are not specifically dramatic facts; there is no difference in kind between the events-in-the-head which are involved in Drama and those involved in eating, walking, loving, fearing. Function does create a special tone but it is not dramatic in any absolute sense; all activities when thought of as separate from the general flow of sensation have a special tone; the very act of thinking of them as separated gives form and allows one to sense a tone peculiar to the activitiy. The important point is that these tones are controlled by the person, not by the activity in which he is involved. (Not necessarily in the narrow sense of willfully, consciously controlled, however.) When we change our Drama, its tone will change. We don't tailor our plays to suit some eternal, proper dramatic tone.

Consciousness of the fictional nature of categories and generalizations, while it does not remove all difficulties, at least makes us less likely to blunder beyond necessary generalization into groundless speculation or dogmatic prescriptiveness.

To put it briefly, people did not discover Drama, they invented it. Talk of the "rules" or "nature" of Drama describes "what people do" and "how people respond" not "what Drama is" or "what it demands."

This exercise brings the student into direct contact with basic theoretical issues. It encourages them to understand the effect of basic philosophical orientation on all reasoning. This, of course, is a statement of the Materialist/Empiricist orientation as it applies to drama/theatre and an attck on Idealism/Rationalism.

SAMPLE STATEMENT FOR ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION:

" I have found the hitherto neglected Shakespearian essence: the tempest-music opposition. Tempests are thus all-important. Taken in opposition with music they form the only principle of unity in Shakespeare. Details change but all may be shown to revolve on this one axis. Therefore, by seeing each in turn as a new aspect, a new presentation, of this one theme, we unify the whole of Shakespeare's work; nor could that work be so unified in any other fashion."

G. Wilson Knight

Knight is another ready source for epistemologically naive assertions. This one is a particularly spectacular statement because so many errors in conceptualization and reasoning are compressed in such a small space. It is good fodder for analysis and evaluation and for discussion of the basic epistemological issues.

Roger Gross

SAMPLE ARGUMENT FOR ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION:

BAD ART

"Bad art is inaccurate art. It is art that makes false reports. If a scientist falsified a report either deliberately or through negligence we consider him as either a criminal or a bad scientist according to the enormity of his offense, and he is punished or despised accordingly.....

"If an artist falsifies his report as to the nature of man, as to his own nature, as to the nature of his ideal of the perfect, as to the nature of his ideal of this, that or the other, of god, if god exists, of the life force, of the nature of good and evil, if good and evil exist, of the force with which he suffers or is made glad; if the artist falsifies his reports on these matters or on any other matter in order that he may conform to the tests of his time, to the proprieties of a sovereign, to the conveniences of a preconceived code of ethics, then that artist lies. If he lies out of deliberate will to lie, if he lies out of carelessness, out of laxiness, out of cowardice, out of any sort of negligence whatsoever, he nevertheless lies and he should be punished or despised in proportion to the seriousness of his offense."

Taken from "The Serious Artist", by Ezra Pound, 1913.

PONDER THIS! CAREFULLY. IS HE RIGHT? HOW COULD WE PROVE IT ONE WAY OR ANOTHER? HOW MAY THIS STANDARD BE APPLIED, IF IT IS ACCEPTABLE AT ALL? ETC. BE CRITICAL AND CAREFUL!

This exercise requires the student to go beyond his usual impressionistic responses to arguments about art. It is only useful if the student is required to elaborate Pound's argument fully, identify the kinds of argument and evidence, and evaluate them meticulously.

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CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING THEORIES: (an outline)

It is inappropriate to speak of theories as "true" or "false". Theories are not matters of fact. All theoretical statements are approximations of reality. They are attempts to capture in words certain aspects of a reality which is much more complex than our language. All our theories are tentative explanations.

We speak, then, not of the "truth" of a theory but of its tenability and its usefulness. Is it reasonable (considering logic, evidence, etc.) and is it useful (considering our purposes) to act, for the time being, as if the theory describes and explains reality? Theories are tools.

There are many standards by which we might evaluate theories. The eight which are commonly thought to have the highest priority are:

1) Explanatory power: Does the theory account for all the relevant factors? The more thoroughly the explanation accounts for the experience, the more tenable and useful it is.

2) Logical coherence: Do the inferences drawn in the course of the argument necessarily follow from the premises? Does it all hold together in one unified structure of relations?

3) Compatability with Related Theories: What would we have to throw out in order to accept this theory? If acceptance of this theory would require us to abandon theories which seem more tenable and useful, then we will be reluctant to accept the new theory on the basis of its "internal" values.

4) Predictive Accuracy: Does the theory imply hypotheses which have been verified? The more verified implications, the higher the probability of future implications being verified, therefore, the more tenable the theory.

5) Testability: Do the statements in the theory relate directly enough to observable, measureable experience to allow us to test them empirically? The more testable, the more useful, and tenable.

6) Data Base: How much evidence has been acculumlated to support the theory? The more supportive data, the more tenable the theory.

7) Heuristic Productivity: How suggestive is the theory? Does it suggest new possibilities for explanation or experiment? Does it open new doors? The greater the suggestiveness, the more useful.

8) Parsimony (or Elegance): In comparing competitive theories, we use this standard: other things being equal, the theory requiring the fewest assumptions is the preferred theory. Since unsupported assumptions are highly vulnerable, it is considered more likely that the theory with the greater number of assumptions will fall first. (Assumptions may be as broad as major precedent theories or as narrow as a highly abstract term.)